

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 04933 102318Z

21

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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USIA-15 OMB-01 AID-20 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 DRC-01

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R 102251Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4285

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 4933

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GT

SUBJECT: GOG RELATIONS WITH OPPOSITION PARTIES

1. DURING AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON PRESIDENT LAUGERUD SEPTEMBER 9, WISDOM OF COUNTRIES SITTING DOWN AND TALKING FRANKLY WITH EACH OTHER AROSE IN SEVERAL CONTEXTS. PRESIDENT THEN SAID THAT SPEAKING OF VIRTUES OF TALKING, HE WAS FOLLOWING POLICY OF REGULAR AND FREQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH GUATEMALAN POLITICAL OPPOSITION. THIS HAD BEEN UNTHINKABLE IN PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION, BUT HE WAS DELIBERATELY ATTEMPTING TO BREAK DOWN THESE TABOOS. AMONG THOSE WITH WHOM HE HAD ESTABLISHED REGULAR CONTACT WERE ROBERTO VALDEAVELLANO, RECTOR OF SAN CARLOS UNIVERSITY, AND LEONEL PONCIANO, MAYOR OF GUATEMALA CITY. HE NOTED THAT MEANINGFUL EXCHANGE BETWEEN PREVIOUS MAYOR AND PREVIOUS NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN IMPOSSIBLE. PRESIDENT SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH HE MIGHT NOT REACH AGREEMENT WITH OPPOSITION, AT LEAST EACH UNDERSTOOD BETTER THE OTHER'S POINT OF VIEW.

2. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT SPEAKING PERSONALLY HE HAD BEEN MOST FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY TONE LAUGERUD ADMINISTRATION
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PAGE 02 GUATEM 04933 102318Z

HAD SET IN ITS EARLY MONTHS. HE HAD OBSERVED ITS

OPENNESS AND EASE OF ACCESS AND WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITH ITS OPPOSITION. AMBASSADOR STRONGLY AGREED WITH POLICY OF OPEN COMMUNICATIONS; OFTEN DIFFERENCES COULD BE NARROWED BY TALKING, EVEN IF THEY COULD NOT BE FULLY RESOLVED.

3. COMMENT: ADMINISTRATION'S DELIBERATE ESCHEWING OF HARD-LINE TACTICS IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS HAS IN FACT CONTRIBUTED MARKEDLY TO LOWERING OF POLITICAL TENSION. MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF PRESIDENT'S REMARKS TO AMBASSADOR WAS HIS STATEMENT THAT HE IS PURSUING THIS LINE IN FULL AWARENESS IT NOT THAT FAVORED BY FORMER PRESIDENT ARANA.

4. PRESIDENT DID NOT GIVE ANY INDICATION OF WHOM HE HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH, APART FROM TWO NAMES CITED. EMBASSY LABOR OFFICER WAS TOLD BY ARTURO MORALES CUBAS, HEAD OF CTF LABOR FEDERATION WHICH SUPPORTED LAUGERUD'S PRINCIPAL OPPONENT IN MARCH ELECTIONS, THAT MORALES HAD RECENTLY BEEN ASTONISHED, AND FAVORABLY IMPRESSED, BY RECEIVING PHONE CALL FROM PRESIDENT LAUGERUD PERSONALLY INVITING HIM TO MEETING. WE WILL BE INTERESTED TO SEE IF LAUGERUD POLICY ALSO EXTENDS TO CHRISTIAN DOMOCRATIC LEADERS, WHO ARE MORE HARD-CORE OPPOSITION THAN PONCIANO, VALDEAVELLANO, OR MORALES. MELOY

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